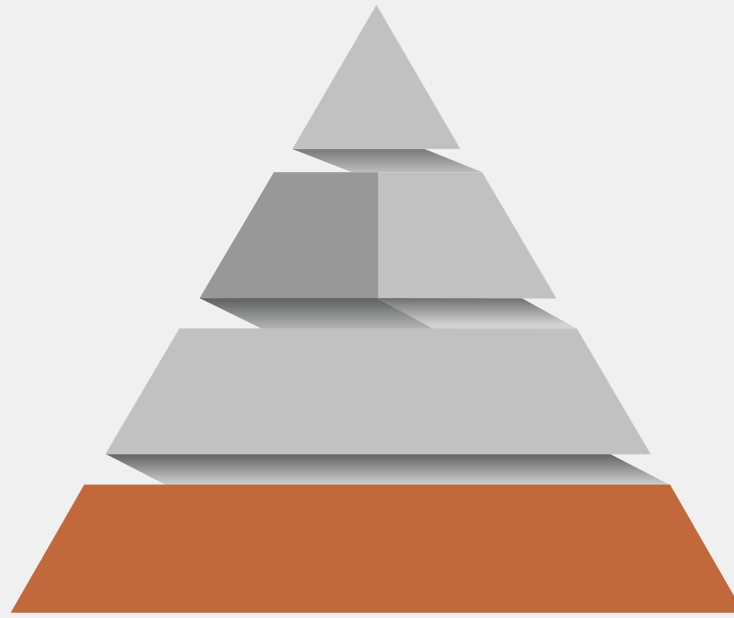


# How Pennsylvania's Magisterial District Courts and Municipal Court Operate

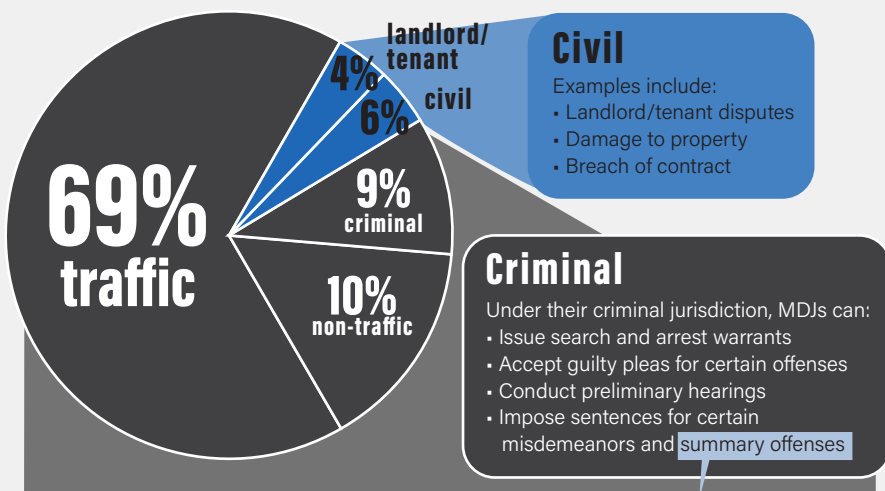


## What are Magisterial District and Municipal Court?

Magisterial District courts are where most people have their first experience with the judicial system. Magisterial District Judges (MDJs) handle civil cases with claim amounts up to \$12,000, summary matters and have initial jurisdiction over all criminal cases. Unique to Philadelphia, Philadelphia Municipal Court (PMC) judges also preside over misdemeanor bench trials when the maximum penalty is prison less than five years.

Pennsylvania has

**501 MDJs**   
**27 PMC judges**



### Civil

Examples include:

- Landlord/tenant disputes
- Damage to property
- Breach of contract

### Criminal

Under their criminal jurisdiction, MDJs can:

- Issue search and arrest warrants
- Accept guilty pleas for certain offenses
- Conduct preliminary hearings
- Impose sentences for certain misdemeanors and summary offenses

## Summary offenses

These include traffic and non-traffic offenses and are the most minor criminal offense in Pennsylvania. Summary cases do not require a jury and may result in fines, costs and sometimes restitution. Examples include:

- Disorderly conduct
- Speeding
- Underage drinking

Total number of new Magisterial District Court cases in 2024:

**2,117,538**

Total number of new PMC cases in 2024:

**29,815**

### Other MDJ duties:

- May perform marriage ceremonies
- Fix and set bail
- Issue emergency Protection From Abuse orders (PFAs)

Additional data, including county-level data, available at <http://www.pacourts.us/news-and-statistics/research-and-statistics/>. Data does not include Philadelphia County.

